

Notes for Remarks at a Panel Session at the
“Breaking Global Deadlocks” Conference

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Maureen O’Neil
President, International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

- like most development agencies, much of the work IDRC supports is resolutely “local”: we understand the importance of the local context, and strive to ensure that the research we support responds to realities “on the ground” as defined by decision-makers in the South
- but a portion of the research we support – and, I would argue, a growing proportion – is explicitly international in its orientation, and aims to improve the evidence base for global governance in a variety of fields. It is this strand in IDRC funding that led us to support the L20 project, and that explains why we continue to see value in this area of enquiry
- IDRC has a long tradition of supporting research dealing with international economic relations, particularly in the field of trade policy and negotiations. Since the early 1990s, we have supported a set of regional trade policy research networks in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, as well as individual projects dealing with specific trade policy issues from services to standards. We have also played a role in supporting work on international financial governance issues: this includes support to the Global Financial Governance Initiative in the early part of this decade; to the work of the Ngaire Woods’ Global Economic Governance program at Oxford; to the long-standing G24 Research Program, which supports independent research to inform developing country representatives to the IFIs.
- A common concern in most if not all of this work has been the need to examine alternative institutional arrangements that provide a more effective voice for developing countries in international negotiations, whether in the field of trade, debt or macroeconomic policy coordination. This conclusion stems not simply from considerations of “fairness”, but also from a conviction that key challenges facing the global economy cannot be solved without the direct involvement of a broader cross-section of world governments. The rich countries, in other words, cannot simply “go it alone”, both on equity and on efficiency grounds. This conclusion pre-dates the more recent dramatic growth of China and India, but has been given additional force by the explosion of the so-called “BRICs” onto the world stage
- Given this background, IDRC’s support to the initial L20 project was a logical progression. It also provided us with an opportunity to examine the ways in which new institutional arrangements at the leader’s level could help to “break deadlocks” (to use the title of this workshop) in other fields beyond international economic relations, which also touch upon

IDRC program concerns – whether that be public health and the spread of pandemics; nuclear non-proliferation and other peace and security issues; or global climate change.

- While some of the initial political impetus for an “L20” solution has faded, the underlying logic remains unassailable: a more “inclusive”—and hence more effective – system of global governance is needed if the world community is to grapple with the challenges of the coming decade. We at IDRC remain committed to supporting research and analysis to this end, and I look forward to the discussions over the next two days as we delve more deeply into both the “what” and the “how” of moving forward.